

# Pitfalls in Tracing Ancestry in England's North Country

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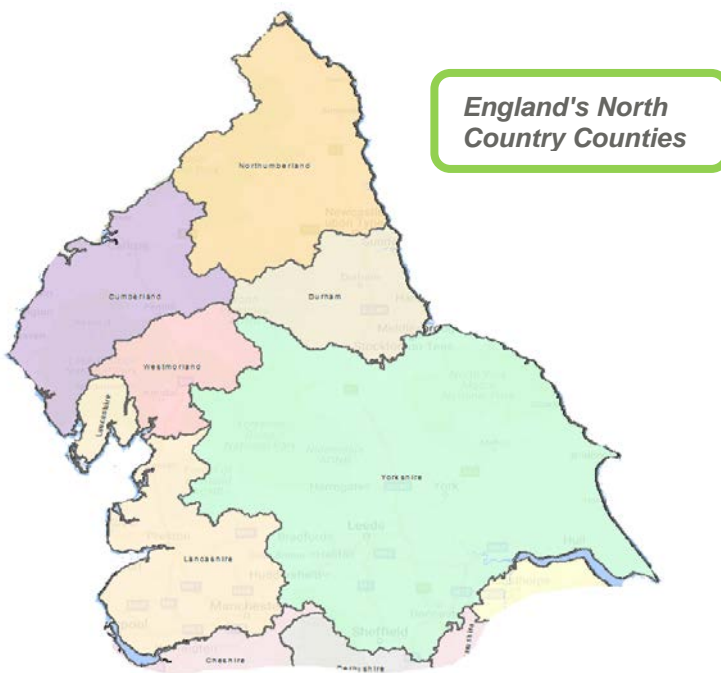
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## Introduction

Typically, researching England's Church of England parish registers is conducted on a parish by parish basis with few or no exceptions. Contrastingly, did you know that in the more Northern counties, such as in Lancashire, the opposite is the case where research on a chapelry by chapelry/district church basis is often the norm. And because the population in each ancient parish had the potential to explode, due to the Industrial Revolution and consequent massive migrations into its county border[s], Lancashire, and the West Riding of Yorkshire both were hit by population expansion the hardest. How can researchers conduct thorough research in these counties, unless they can construct (make a list of) a complete, accurate picture that includes all churches and chapels for each target parish? This guide will help you identify and accurately list ***all*** (Church of England) chapelries, chapels of ease, district churches, and ecclesiastical parishes within each ancient parish boundary with the *best* resources. You will be enabled to conduct more thorough research in Lancashire and/or all other northern England counties that possess numerous chapelries (sometimes known as chapels of ease, district churches, or ecclesiastical parishes).

Counties comprising England's North Country could include—Cheshire, Cumberland, County Durham, Lancashire, Northumberland, Westmorland, and Yorkshire:



**'Pitfalls' in Researching in Northern England's Counties**

- Sparse population in Lancashire and West Yorkshire during pre-Industrial Revolution times (~1740); massive migrations into Lancashire, West Yorkshire and other northern regions in especially the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries
- Church of England response to the influx of populous hoards: over 800 Chapels of ease, district churches, ecclesiastical churches & chapelries were built just in England's 7 northern counties alone vs the other 35 counties (about 400!).
- Passage of the Lord Hardwicke Marriage act – 1754-1837; marriages “in the parish church only”, before “two or more witnesses”. This created key or select ‘marriage centres’—usually in city cathedrals or the nearest market town parish— attracted large numbers of couples to be married; fewer marriages occurred in local and/or more remote parishes
- Many of England's largest, most populated parishes are in the north—all with numerous chapelries attached to them (see in parenthesis), i.e. Manchester (160+), York Minster, Leeds (43), Liverpool (35), Sheffield (35), Whalley (42), etc.
- Proportionately more Northern England families aligned with Nonconformist denominations by 1851, i.e. Methodism. See [bmdregisters.co.uk](http://bmdregisters.co.uk), [ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com), [familysearch.org](http://familysearch.org), [theGenealogist.co.uk](http://theGenealogist.co.uk), Lancashire Online Parish Clerk, Google! i.e. “Liverpool”, 2) “Roman Catholic”, 3) “baptisms”, or “marriages”
- Many industrial colliers (i.e. coal) moved from one mining district to another, as mining site, one after another would ‘dry up’, thus inducing migrant movement

## Historical Background

### Historical Events Affecting Records and Records-keeping in England's North Country

- 1534 – Henry VIII – declares himself head of the “Roman” church in England
- 1558 - New call for parishes to keep parish registers
- 1597 - Archbishop of Canterbury calls for annual Bishop's transcriptions to be made
- 1642-1660 - England's Civil War; Charles I – prosecutes war against his own people; parish register-keeping disrupted by as early as 1635 to 1642.
- 1662 Act of Uniformity – 2257 clergy turned out onto the street; Nonconformists may preach 5 miles away from the local parish, can't hold office in politics or military
- 1740 to post-1800 – Industrialist contributions to chapel-building (private funding of)
- 1753 Lord Hardwicke Act is passed – most marriages in the north took place only in select parishes (i.e. mostly cities and market towns) rather than in the more local parishes, such as in Manchester Cathedral
- 1783-1793 – taxes on baptisms and other Church of England ordinances – caused many to not register these vital events; rescinded in 1794. Many retro-baptismal, marriage and burial entries in parish registers
- 1812 – Rose Act passes Parliament: new registers give occupation, age at burial, and place of abode

- 1822;1824;1827;1831 – Church Building Acts passed by Parliament which caused massive church building and construction to accelerate especially in England's northern counties
- 1836 – The Birth, Marriage and Death Registration Act of 1836: maiden name of mother/spouse is provided

## Population Growth in England's North: Chapels, County by County:

- Lancashire began with only ~76 ancient parishes—one of the least populated counties at the time in all of England; Industrial Revolution-caused migration into Lancashire created needs of over **400** chapels of ease (Church of England) to be built for an average of **8** chapelries per parish! Lancashire became England's second most populated county!
- Cheshire began with about 94 parishes; 51 chapelries – **1** parish of every **2** has a chapelry attached
- Cumberland began with about 114 parishes; 33 chapelries = **1** in **3** has a chapelry attached
- County Durham began with about 91 ancient parishes; 14 chapelries = **1** in **6** has an chapelry attached
- Northumberland began with about 95 ancient parishes; 16 chapelries = **1** in **6** has a chapelry attached to it
- Westmorland began with about 49 ancient parishes; 26 chapelries = **1** in **2** has a chapelry attached to it
- Yorkshire began with about 648 ancient parishes; 182 chapelries/ecclesiastical churches = **1** in **3.5** has a chapelry attached to it

## Reference Aids & Tools for Researching Northern Counties

Reference aids (rank-ordered below) that identify most complete lists of all registers-keeping chapels in each parish boundary—including *all* chapels of ease, chapelries, district churches, and ecclesiastical parishes:

1. Wiki.FamilySearch.org: Type name of county; click "Parishes" and select a parish name; on the parish page click— "**Comprehensive Lists of Chapels and Churches**" for the complete list of all chapels of ease and district churches etc, attached to the parish; printout this list to be used to help you conduct more thorough research in i.e. Lancashire
2. FamilySearch's Wiki -- wiki.familysearch.org – "Parish" pages each of which provides critical detail for every parish, i.e. Halifax St John Parish Type the parish name (click the parish name, then scroll down to "Church Records" where you'll find links found in the colored table which link to online indexed data that's available for certain ranges of years which you may research; some of the links are to free websites)
3. Gazetteers –
  - a. *A Topographical Dictionary of England* (Lewis): pub. 1848
  - b. *Imperial gazetteer of England and Wales*: pub. 1870

4. Maps –
  - a. England 1851 Jurisdictions Maps – showing parish boundaries; can printout
  - b. Visionofbritain.org.uk – has old Ordnance Survey Maps which provide great details for England
  - c. The Historic Parishes of England and Wales: An Electronic Map of Boundaries Before 1850 with a Gazetteer and Metadata Paperback – May, 2001
5. A very helpful Website – Genuki – see at [www.genuki.org.uk](http://www.genuki.org.uk); church database provides researchers with one of the most thorough lists of parishes and chapels within a 1, 3, 5, or 10-mile radius; can printout

## Reason Your Ancestors Were Not in the 'Right' Parish Church

- Seek to learn names of chapelries attached to the target parish; if you don't you're missing church registers within the target (ancient) parish! Thorough research is not possible.
- Search *every* chapelry as well as the ancient parish to which it was attached
- Some families were lax in having events recorded.
- Names may have been changed or were variations, i.e. illegitimacy.
- Baptisms may have occurred years after the birth or several siblings were baptized at once.
- Some Nonconformist marriages may be found in Church of England registers starting in 1754
- From 1783-1793, a tax was imposed on entries in registers so some people did not register events.

## Some Research Concepts

1. Traditional naming patterns:
  - **1<sup>st</sup> son** – named after father's father
  - **2<sup>nd</sup> son** – named after mother's father
  - **3<sup>rd</sup> son** – named after father
  - **1<sup>st</sup> daughter** – named after mother's mother
  - **2<sup>nd</sup> daughter** – named after father's mother
  - **3<sup>rd</sup> daughter** - named after mother
2. 1754 marriage – father's name sometimes given
3. 1813 – baptisms give father's occupation; burials give age at burial

4. 1837 – marriages give father's name, births provide maiden name of mother
5. registers - delayed i.e. baptism entries?
6. Consider handwriting, condition of records & availability
7. There was nearly 30% nonconformity by 1851; abt 40% for Birkenhead, Preston and Liverpool, etc.
8. Seek to learn names of chapelries attached to the target parish
9. Search every chapelry as well as the ancient parish to which it was attached
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